

Making 'The Cat Sat on the ...'

This little book makes use of off-cuts from larger projects. It has basic shapes in contrasting textures, with a cat which can be taken through the book, trying out each mat in turn, and with a surprise at the end.

I expected to use a fluffy toy cat but the life-like feline form and posture of this wooden one seemed to be the right size and shape for small hands to grasp. It is firmly attached to the book by a ribbon which is tightly looped around its neck and plaited - long enough to reach each mat and sit on it, but not so long as to be dangerous in any way.

The foundation of each page is a piece of plastic canvas (approximately postcard size) which is covered on both sides by a piece of quilting padding, folded over it and sewn round the other three sides. I used strong cotton fabric in various colours for the illustration pages and cream calico or curtain-lining for the text pages so that I could write the words directly onto the fabric with laundry-marker, sticking a plastic braille label below. The fabric was measured carefully, allowing for generous turnings all round with extra for the spine edge. (Incidentally, there was enough of the front cover material to wrap right round the outside of the spine and complete the book neatly at the end of the whole process.) The paper patterns I used as cutting guides measured approximately:

- 11cm x 16cm for the plastic canvas
- 22cm x 16cm for the padding
- 17cm x 26cm for the top layer cotton fabric.

Checking carefully at each stage, turnings were pressed and tacked. Words were added to the cream, left-hand pages, leaving space for spine at the right-hand side. These were put on one side while work was done on the coloured, right-hand pages. Fabric was tacked to each padded canvas page before adding the tactile illustration, leaving spine allowance at the left-hand side.

Front cover

The basket was made from fine embroidery canvas and calico with edges bound by material used for the back cover. It was sewn firmly through all layers to the plastic canvas.

Page 2

A piece of upholstery webbing with raw edges covered by tape was sewn through all layers onto the plastic canvas to form the rectangular hard mat.

Page 4

The soft oval mat consists of a piece of fleece with quite a deep pile.

Page 6

A circle cut from a scourer forms a rough mat.

Page 8

I thoroughly enjoyed making the smooth square mat: wool on canvas in brick stitch with long-legged cross stitch round the edge! However, it would have been better to sew it on so that the smoothness could be felt horizontally rather than vertically, I think.

Page 10

A squeaker from a market-stall was kept in place under a piece of muslin sewn onto the page. The patchwork for the squeaky (roughly hexagonal) mat has been waiting to be used for years!

Construction

The two sides of each page were joined to each other by oversewing with natural linen thread round three sides and with running stitch down the fourth (spine) side.

All the pages were joined at the spine by sewing through all layers but it was very hard work and the result is not really satisfactory. I shall be studying the construction techniques used to complete the other books in the hope of making a better job of it another time!